

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Huang Chen, PRC Ambassador  
to Paris  
Mr. Tsao, Political Counselor, PRC Embassy  
Mr. Ling, Interpreter, PRC Embassy  
  
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs  
Mr. Jack P. Kubisch, U.S. Charge d'Affaires,  
Paris  
Winston Lord, NSC Staff

DATE & TIME: Saturday, November 25, 1972; 12:35 a.m. -  
1:30 a.m.

PLACE: PRC Embassy, Paris, France

(The American party was greeted at the door by Mr. Tsao and escorted inside the Embassy where Ambassador Huang greeted Dr. Kissinger warmly. He took the American party into the living room. There was some small talk, including Ambassador Huang's and Dr. Kissinger's mutual pleasure at seeing one another again.)

Ambassador Huang: You are busy.

Dr. Kissinger: I am caught between two groups of Vietnamese fighting each other. It is a terrible fate.

Ambassador Huang: The Chinese have a saying, "galloping all the time on horseback." (laughter)

Dr. Kissinger: That was recently translated into Italian.

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Ambassador Huang: Seeing you reminds me of my old friend, General Walters.

Dr. Kissinger: He is now in Washington. I see him often.

Ambassador Huang: I also remember my old colleague, Ambassador Watson. I am glad to hear that he and Mrs. Watson will be in Paris November 27.

Mr. Kubisch: Mr. Watson is coming then and Mrs. Watson later.

Ambassador Huang: I think when Mr. Watson comes he will ask to go to China.

Dr. Kissinger: His daughter wishes to go to China as well.

Ambassador Huang: And a friend of Miss Watson's also.

Dr. Kissinger: I think the Ambassador has learned English. (Ambassador Huang indicates he has picked up some.)

Ambassador Huang: Mr. Watson is an old friend, and the Chinese People's Institute will invite them. If Miss Watson and her friend travel with Mr. and Mrs. Watson, they will be the guests of the Chinese People's Institute. If Miss Watson and her friend go alone, the trip will be arranged by the travel agency.

Dr. Kissinger: I was thinking again on going to China, as you probably know. I am serious -- I am thinking of going in early January.

Ambassador Huang: You are welcome whenever you wish to go to China.

Dr. Kissinger: I look forward to it very much, but I must lose weight first because I know I gain whenever I go there.

Ambassador Huang: How much did you gain last time when I was there to welcome you?

Dr. Kissinger: Four or five pounds.

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Ambassador Huang: (In French) Pas beaucoup.

Dr. Kissinger: That was because I only had five meals a day.

Ambassador Huang: I am sorry I couldn't see you from 7:00 to 8:00 tonight. I held a reception for the medical delegation which just visited your country.

Dr. Kissinger: I saw them at the White House, and the President saw them. I had an opportunity to shake their hands.

Ambassador Huang: Our medical delegation told me a lot of things about their visit to the U.S. They are very much satisfied to be received by President Nixon and some other friends. They also told me that they saw Dr. Kissinger. We are satisfied that the Chinese delegations, including the medical delegation, were warmly received by the American Government. A few days ago our acrobatic team arrived in Canada and will go on later to the United States.

Dr. Kissinger: They will come to America in December, around December 15.

Ambassador Huang: We have encouraged them to put on a performance to display their best technique to the American people.

Dr. Kissinger: I look forward to seeing them. I visited the Institute where they were training when we were in Peking in June.

Ambassador Huang: This time you will have an opportunity to see if their technique has improved.

Dr. Kissinger: I look forward to seeing them. [To Lord]: Are they coming to Washington?

Mr. Lord: They will be at the Kennedy Center in January.

Ambassador Huang: Now we are discussing with Mr. Kubisch the exposition of unearthed relics.

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Dr. Kissinger: That includes the jade costumes from the Imperial City.

Ambassador Huang: There is something better than that.

Dr. Kissinger: Your collection is going to New York.

Ambassador Huang: First it is coming to Paris, and then it will go to other countries and after that it will go to the U. S.

I have learned that President Nixon and you are very much concerned with the Paris channel between our two sides.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. We have a very great interest in it.

Ambassador Huang: We are very satisfied to see the progress between our two sides through this channel, and we hope that the channel will see further progress in the future.

Dr. Kissinger: We hope to see the Ambassador in America sometime soon. (Ambassador Huang smiles.) We consider relations with the People's Republic as one of the most important aspects of our foreign policy. As I told your Vice Foreign Minister, what we started in the previous Administration we will accelerate now that the President is reelected, and we expect to take large steps toward normalization of our relations. (Dr. Kissinger repeats the substance when Mr. Ling has trouble understanding.) It is our firm intention.

Ambassador Huang: Yes, I read the speech delivered by President Nixon.

Dr. Kissinger: Ambassador Malik was very happy when your Vice Minister left New York (laughter). The Minister always torments him.

Ambassador Huang: He appeared to be quite fierce last year.

Dr. Kissinger: Ambassador Malik?

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Interpreter: Ambassador Malik.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes.

Ambassador Huang: I have learned that this year he is not as fierce as last year.

Dr. Kissinger: He has been intimidated.

Ambassador Huang: Why? They have so many atom bombs and so many troops. They have more than one million troops along the Chinese border. They are quite strong. Why be afraid?

Dr. Kissinger: They are very nervous.

(Mr. Tsao starts to leave the room and is called back by the Ambassador.)

Ambassador Huang: It is too late to invite you to eat some Chinese food. The Chinese custom is to entertain our guests in any event with some Chinese food. This will be more simple than a meal. (Mr. Tsao leaves.)

Dr. Kissinger: I am sorry that I could not accept your very nice invitation.

Ambassador Huang: I know you didn't have time. I hope sometime in the future you can do so.

Dr. Kissinger: I would be honored. I am told by the Minister [Kubisch] you serve the best Chinese food in Paris.

Ambassador Huang: One of the menus for the meals during President Nixon's visit to China was published here in Paris and gave a great boon to Chinese restaurants in Paris. So we intended to try our best to make the dishes according to the menu for the President. Many of our friends who come to our embassy to have a Chinese dinner have never been to China, and since they don't know the dishes in China they say we have the best food in Paris. Actually it is not so good as Peking. The other day Mr. Kubisch also said that our dishes were good. If Mr. Kubisch went to China he would say they were not so good here.

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Mr. Kubisch: It is hard to believe that it would be better in Peking than here in your embassy, Mr. Ambassador. It is so delicious.

Ambassador Huang: Dr. Kissinger must know very well that the food in Peking is better than the food here.

Dr. Kissinger: I have never had a meal here, but I know the food in Peking is outstanding.

Ambassador Huang: I hope to entertain you in the future.

Dr. Kissinger: I hope there will not be too many more trips to Paris on this particular enterprise on which I am engaged, though I am always delighted to see the Ambassador.

Ambassador Huang: I am also very glad to see Dr. Kissinger. How many days longer will Dr. Kissinger stay in Paris?

Dr. Kissinger: I will decide tomorrow. I will decide tomorrow whether we can finish quickly or whether I should have to come back. When we have made a decision I will let the Minister call you just for your information. (Ambassador Huang nods).

(Warm snacks, including spring rolls, were then brought in, adding to the tea already there.)

Ambassador Huang: According to the broadcast today, we learned that today you and the Vietnamese side once again held talks.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, I had a private talk today with Le Duc Tho, with only my Deputy, General Haig, and myself present. On the Vietnamese side were Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy. (Ambassador Huang then led the party in a round of gombays with mao tai.)

Ambassador Huang: I learned that President Nixon's daughter would like to go to China.

Dr. Kissinger: She would like to go next spring.

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Ambassador Huang: If she would like to go, it is better to go in the spring.

Dr. Kissinger: That is her intent. I was going to talk to your Ambassador in New York about it.

We are very pleased the way this channel is working and very pleased at the efforts you are making. You and I established it.  
(Ambassador Huang smiles.)

Ambassador Huang: I should say that Mr. Watson and I cooperated very well. Although our cooperation did not last very long, we cooperated very well. Of course, I am cooperating very well with Mr. Kubisch now.

Dr. Kissinger: Is he behaving himself?

Ambassador Huang: He is a very good collaborator.

Dr. Kissinger: If he gives you any trouble, let me know.

Ambassador Huang: At one time Mr. Kubisch was in the Navy and I was an Army man once, and thus we are colleagues.

Dr. Kissinger: Maybe we will see a General as Ambassador here after January 1.

Ambassador Huang: That would be fine. In that case your Ambassador and I would be at the same time colleagues and Generals.

Dr. Kissinger: You would be planning military campaigns all the time.

Ambassador Huang: Frankness is one of the characteristics of Generals, of army men, so we can exchange views very frankly.

Dr. Kissinger: Absolutely. (not translated) We want this channel to develop more and more.

Ambassador Huang: We hope the same. Gombay! (The party then drinks more mao tai.)

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Dr. Kissinger: If they have to carry me and the Minister into the Embassy, I won't tell them where we have been. (Ambassador Huang laughs.)

Ambassador Huang: In that case it will be spread in the papers tomorrow.

Dr. Kissinger: That would be quite serious. In Washington they are happy with anything I do as long as I am not photographed with a girl. (Ambassador Huang laughs.)

Ambassador Huang: A few days ago I saw a picture of Dr. Kissinger together with the wife of a friend. The introduction to the article made this clear.

Dr. Kissinger: That's living very dangerously. (Ambassador Huang laughs.) He [the husband] made the reservations for us at lunch.

Ambassador Huang: These are the small hours, and we are still keeping you up. Will you go on with your talks tomorrow?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, we will go on tomorrow. I have another private meeting with Le Duc Tho in the morning, and after that we will decide whether to continue or to interrupt for a few days.

Ambassador Huang: What do you think the prospects are for this round of talks? (Mr. Tsao takes out his notebook and begins taking notes.)

Dr. Kissinger: We've settled many problems. I want to be honest with you. We would like to make peace. We have nothing to win in Vietnam. If we can normalize our relations with Peking, we can normalize our relations with Hanoi. And I think our interests -- that is, the interests of Peking and Washington -- are not too different. At least we want only a neutral, independent Indochina. We don't want any foreign powers that are far away establishing a military position there. But we also have our principles, and we cannot make an agreement when our allies feel that we are sacrificing all their concerns.

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There is one principal problem, which is the presence of so many North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. They tell us that these are not North Vietnamese troops, and for reasons of their principles, we are willing to maintain what we know is a fiction. But if the North Vietnamese, outside of the agreement, would withdraw some troops, or would make some gesture that indicated they understood the problem which would enable us to preserve the principle, we think we could settle quite rapidly.

And it is difficult to imagine that having come this close to an agreement, we should fail now. But if we cannot get an agreement, we must prosecute the war. And I tell you, really in friendship, given the dangers I foresee in the world outside Vietnam it cannot be in the interests of some of our friends to pressure us to give up our principles, because we will be in many difficult situations where we will have to make difficult decisions when greater powers are involved. (Dr. Kissinger repeats the substance when Mr. Ling has trouble understanding.) In Vietnam this is the issue. We want to settle. But if the American people are told that the U. S. will do anything to have peace, then if some great power with aggressive tendencies engages in aggression, it will be very difficult to appeal to our people to resist them as we in the White House believe we should resist them.

So, we want to make a genuine peace, but we must have some recognition that we too have the respect of our allies to consider. That is the principal issue right now.

Ambassador Huang: Because we are friends, I would like to use this opportunity to say some sincere words about the Vietnam problem to Mr. Kissinger. Mr. Kissinger is surely aware of the Chinese position on the Vietnam problem. (During this presentation, Mr. Ling is clearly reading from a prepared English text, as he takes very few notes on what the Ambassador is saying, merely seeming to correct a few words on his notebook as the Ambassador speaks.)

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. (not translated)

Ambassador Huang: I should very frankly say that we very much regret that you did not sign the agreement which was scheduled in October.

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Now it seems very clear that you acted that way in order to suit your own unilateral needs. During recent days, according to what we have gotten to know, the Vietnamese side has been carrying on the talks with great flexibility. Considering the situation as a whole, they have made all the concessions which they can make. Now everything is up to your side. If once again you fail to reach an agreement with them, how can you achieve trust in others? Besides such a result will only benefit someone who is contending for hegemony. I would like to repeat again that since we are friends that is all I want to say sincerely about the Vietnam problem to you.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand. I appreciate it. But let me as a friend speak equally sincerely to you. You have your own experience with us. You know we have kept every promise we have made to you, and we always believe that reliability is a very important principle. (Ambassador Huang confers with his colleagues and Mr. Kubisch repeats the word "reliability.")

But what did we face with the Vietnamese? For four years I was negotiating with them and there was never any change in their position. They always said exactly the same thing for four years. Suddenly on October 8 they wanted to settle a war that has lasted ten years in three days. In order to show our good will, we cooperated with a procedure which was, to put it mildly, very extraordinary. We always told them that we had to consult our allies. Despite our best efforts, we did not succeed in October. If we had wanted to trap them, if we had wanted to delay the agreement, we could have delayed by arguing about specific provisions indefinitely. But we cooperated with them, and they are now trying to pressure us with this. Now they are giving us deadlines again. They first make an unreasonable demand, then they withdraw it and claim they have made a concession. And they want to trade giving up unreasonable demands for real concessions on our side. That is the difficulty.

When we dealt with you, we did so on an open basis. You never tried to take advantage of us, and I hope we never tried to take advantage of you. If they ever talk to us the way you do, we will settle in one day. It would be very easy.

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But again this week they have changed some wording in paragraphs that have no concrete significance. For example, to give one example, there is a paragraph concerning the ceasefire going into effect which specifies Indochina time. Now it turns out that there is a Saigon time and a Hanoi time. Now we have agreed to use GMT. You have to admit, speaking here privately, that this is not a big concession. It is nothing about which history will be written some day. (Ambassador Huang smiles.) Or maybe I am missing the significance.

And we clarified a few other sentences, so that esthetically it is a better document now. (Mr. Ling does not understand "esthetically.") It reads better for experts who have studied grammar.

So this is the problem. I still think we can settle. But you see another problem is that there are hundreds of American journalists in town, all of whom talk to the North Vietnamese and all of whom happen to dislike the President. (Ambassador Huang smiles.) Despite their dislike, the President got elected by 61 percent of the vote. The Vietnamese must not listen to the journalists. They have listened for too long. The President always means what he says. His word counts. We can have peace this month -- what is it now? -- we can have peace in December. But there has to be an effort on both sides. But we have narrowed the differences this week. It's not true that it depends only on us.

I am sorry I have made such a long speech.

Ambassador Huang: This is our view, that everything depends on your side.

Dr. Kissinger: We don't completely agree.

Ambassador Huang: Of course, we know that you will not agree completely, but I tell you this as friends.

Dr. Kissinger: I appreciate the spirit in which you say this, and I hope that when I visit China in January, when the Prime Minister and I meet, we will not have to talk about Vietnam.

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Ambassador Huang: (In English): Very good!

Dr. Kissinger: The Prime Minister said something to the press. I have already complained to the Vice Minister about it. When an American newspaperman asked him a question, he said he has to give a direct answer. The only man who talks a half hour without saying anything is Mr. Kissinger, he said. He was right, but I had kept that from the press. (The Chinese side appeared to misinterpret the tone, thinking Dr. Kissinger was displeased by the Prime Minister's comments.)

Ambassador Huang: We wonder if the journalists added anything to what Prime Minister Chou En-lai said.

Dr. Kissinger: It was a joke. He meant it as a joke.

Ambassador Huang: It has happened several times that some journalists going from here have twisted what the Prime Minister said here. (Mr. Tsao helps with the translation.)

Dr. Kissinger: But I took it as a compliment. He said it with affection. It was not said as criticism.

Ambassador Huang: The peaceful solution of Vietnam is the burning issue at this moment. I hope when you visit the Prime Minister next year, it will not be necessary to talk about Vietnam again.

Dr. Kissinger: I agree completely.

Ambassador Huang: It is the common desire of the people all over the world, including the American people, the Vietnamese people, and the Chinese people, that the Vietnam war come to an end.

I took part in the current general conference of UNESCO, as head of the Chinese delegation. During the conference I met your head of the delegation to the conference. (Dr. Kissinger asks Mr. Kubisch who that was, and the latter mentioned that it was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs, together with the Ambassador.)

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I congratulated the President for his reelection through the head of your delegation.

Dr. Kissinger: Thank you.

Ambassador Huang: Please once again convey my greetings to Mr. President.

Dr. Kissinger: I will do so with the greatest pleasure, and if you could convey my greetings to the Prime Minister and how much I look forward to seeing him again.

(Dr. Kissinger then gets up to leave. Ambassador Huang escorts the American party to the door in a very cordial atmosphere. Mr. Tsao mentions to Mr. Lord that "you have been very busy." The Chinese party stands on the steps outside the Embassy and waves as the American party drives away.)

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